

**REMARKS**

Claims 1, 3-17, 19 and 20 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 18 is canceled, without prejudice to, or disclaimer of, the subject matter recited therein. No new matter is added.

Applicants appreciate the courtesies shown to Applicants' representative by Examiner Trinh in the March 4, 2009 personal interview. Applicants' separate record of the substance of the interview is incorporated into the following remarks.

Entry of the amendment is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 since the amendment: (a) places the application in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed herein; (b) does not raise any new issues requiring further search and/or consideration, since the amendment cancels a claim; (c) does not present any additional claims without canceling a corresponding number of finally rejected claims; and (d) places the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendment is necessary and was not earlier presented because it is made in response to arguments raised in the final rejection. Entry of the amendment is thus respectfully requested.

Applicants appreciate the Office Action's indication that claims 3-17, 19 and 20 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, and to include all of the features of the base claim and any intervening claims.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-18 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. As discussed above, claim 18 is canceled, and thus, the rejection of claim 18 is moot. As agreed during the personal interview, claims 1-17 are clear and definite, and thus are in compliance with §112, second paragraph.

The Office Action rejects claim 18 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 6,073,334 to Asai et al., or in the alternative, over U.S. Patent No. 6,364,567 to Asai et al. As discussed above, claim 18 is canceled, and thus the rejection of claim 18 is moot.


The Office Action rejects claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,082,603 to Takada et al. (hereinafter Takada) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,421,894 to Tsujimoto et al. (hereinafter Tsujimoto). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

As agreed during the personal interview, neither Takada nor Tsujimoto, even in combination, discloses or renders obvious the combination of features recited in independent claim 1. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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Date: March 10, 2009

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